



Lenawee Conservation District Launches Michigan's First Pheasant Cooperative

After an exciting year developing a new approach to ring-necked pheasant management in Michigan, 2011 closed with the start of the state's first Landowner Pheasant Cooperative. The Lake Hudson Pheasant Cooperative, located in Lenawee County, is comprised of a number of private landowners who want to work together to improve pheasant habitat and ensure the continuation of Michigan's pheasant hunting tradition. This "co-op" was the culmination of efforts throughout the year to initiate a landscape level approach to pheasant habitat enhancement and restoration on both private and public lands. And, it's only the first of many to come.

The formation of Landowner Pheasant Cooperatives is just one of the many facets of the new Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative (MPRI, Initiative), launched in 2011. The mission of the Initiative is to *"restore and rehabilitate habitat on public and private lands to provide a quality ring-necked hunting experience in Michigan."* The Initiative identifies strategies for guiding restoration and management decisions regarding the ring-necked pheasant in Michigan over a 10-year horizon (2011-2020). This includes the formation of 10 Landowner Pheasant Cooperatives by 2015.

The MPRI was formed by a group of agencies and sportsman organizations in response to a declining pheasant population throughout the state. Ring-necks require large, diverse, and undisturbed grasslands to survive and raise their young. Restoration of these declining habitats is the most effective way to increase pheasant populations in Michigan. By doing so, it will additionally provide opportunities to increase local wildlife populations, enhance small game hunting opportunities, and improve hunter satisfaction.

"I believe that the co-op meeting went well and that those in attendance are truly interested in the idea of a pheasant cooperative in their area," said Lauren Lindemann, Farm Bill Biologist with the Lenawee Conservation District. The meeting, the first of its kind in Michigan, brought interested individuals around Lake Hudson together to learn more about the Initiative, and to discuss common interests and goals. Lauren is one of several resource professionals provided by the Initiative to help get Cooperatives off the ground and to guide them through the process. Pheasant Cooperatives are supported by the Initiative free of charge through both technical and financial assistance.

The Lake Hudson Pheasant Cooperative will continue through the process by identifying areas to focus habitat restoration work on, developing a management plan, and improving and maintaining those areas over time. Landowner Pheasant Cooperatives give members an opportunity to network to other area landowners to share their experience on habitat establishment, successful maintenance practices, and where and how many birds they are seeing.

To start, the Initiative focuses on three pilot areas in which to form Landowner Cooperatives, each containing three counties: Lenawee Conservation District (Hillsdale, Lenawee and Monroe Counties); Gratiot Conservation District (Clinton, Gratiot and Saginaw Counties); and Bay Conservation District (Tuscola, Huron and Sanilac Counties). To get information on joining or forming your own Landowner Pheasant Cooperative, please contact:

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Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative partners include Pheasants Forever, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, local Conservation Districts, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, Ducks Unlimited, U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/pheasant.